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The President's Daily Brief

October 23, 1976

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Exempt from general
declassification schedule of E.O. 14176
exemption category 5B(1),(2),(3)
declassified only on approval of
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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

October 23, 1976

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CHINA: Peking radio's casual acknowledgement on Thursday that Hua Kuo-feng had been elevated to chairman of the party Central Committee and of the Military Affairs Commission and that the leftist quartet on the Politburo had been "struck down" still falls short of a formal announcement of Hua's confirmation by the Central Committee.

The broadcast moved closer to a full account of the charges against the leftists, but a detailed description of the machinations of the four has yet to be made official. Nor has a new Politburo, to replace that elected at the last party congress three years ago and now depleted by death and purges, been revealed. The elevation of Li Hsien-nien to the post of premier--generally assumed in Peking to be imminent--also has not been announced, but Hua is now being identified as chairman rather than premier.

Many of these formal announcements may be made this morning during a television broadcast from Peking, which is to be transmitted abroad. In any event, the new Chinese leadership appears anxious to underline the legality of its actions--in contrast to the moves earlier this year against Teng Hsiao-ping, which many Chinese considered "illegal."

Formal endorsement of the new shape of political affairs requires action by the Central Committee and other national bodies. A Central Committee plenum may still be in session; large numbers of officials who were flown to Peking shortly after the arrest of the leftist quartet still appear to be in the capital.

No formal announcement today or during a broadcast scheduled for transmission abroad next Monday would suggest that problems had arisen in sorting out a new leadership and formalizing a new set of programs. The events of the past two weeks, however, have clearly been welcomed widely throughout China and the current leadership appears to be acting with great confidence.

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Even without the final, formal announcements, Hua's enhanced position and the arrest of the leftists seem irrevocable.

Hua appears to have the firm backing of the bulk of the military--a fact underlined in the demonstrations and in Chinese propaganda since the arrests.

One informal and unofficial account of the events surrounding the arrests portrays Defense Minister Yeh Chien-ying--a close associate of Chou En-lai and an outspoken critic of the fallen leftists--as the prime mover in the showdown and the man who convinced Hua to act. This report states that Hua decided to move after an attempt was made on his life on the morning of October 6 by an unnamed individual instigated by the leftist quartet. Hua is reported to have had the support of 8 of the 11 powerful military region commanders, suggesting that the others remained passive or supported the left.

One probably was Li Te-sheng, commander of the Shenyang Military Region (Manchuria). [redacted]

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Nearly all accounts of the turbulent month following Mao's death indicate that the leftist quartet was counting on some sort of military support. Some of the individuals who supported "radical" Red Guard groups during the Cultural Revolution have not been weeded out of active service. How to handle these men could be a delicate problem for the leadership, particularly those in the army. It is possible that the army high command is now grappling with this

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and other immediate problems--the appointment of a new chief of staff and a new head of the general political department.

There may be some concern over how fast to move against individuals in Peking and the provinces who have long espoused leftist positions.

Some 500 people reportedly were arrested in the provinces on the night of October 6-7, but a handful of left-leaning province chiefs and other prominent officials are apparently still at large. No extensive arrests seem to have been made in the propaganda apparatus, long a leftist stronghold.

One Politburo member, Wang Tung-hsing, initially rumored to have fallen with the leftist quartet, appears not to be in political trouble. Wang had been suspected by many Chinese and foreign observers to have leftist sympathies, but he seems to have cast his lot with Hua. Security forces, in Peking, which are under his control, were warmly lauded during a recent demonstration in the capital.

Other possible problem areas are the exact composition of a reconstituted Politburo and the question of whether or not to close out the campaign against Teng Hsiao-ping quickly.

Hua and some of those close to him, however, may prefer not to move too quickly in "reversing the verdict" on Teng, whose shoes Hua has in effect filled.

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LEBANON: Relative calm prevailed throughout Lebanon on the second day of the cease-fire yesterday.

The general quiet in Beirut, the Mount Lebanon area, and northern Lebanon was interrupted only by occasional firing. Action was somewhat heavier in the south near the Israeli border, where Christian forces aided by Israeli artillery have been moving on Palestinian positions for the last several days.

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The joint Palestinian-leftist command met Thursday night to discuss the resolutions approved by Riyadh and issued a statement declaring that it will not respect the cease-fire where Israeli forces are involved.

The leftist command under Kamal Jumblatt reenforced the threat with a unilateral declaration last night of its intention to launch a "large scale armed struggle against the Israeli incursions" if the Arab summit conference in Cairo on Monday does not handle the issue.

The Arab League security forces yesterday reestablished checkpoints to supervise the cease-fire along the line dividing east and west Beirut. A security force spokesman discussed with Lebanese and Palestinian leaders arrangements for additional checkpoints and a buffer zone as interim measures before the arrival of the expanded peacekeeping force.

At the summit in Cairo, Arab League Secretary General Riyad will invite all Arab states to indicate whether and in what numbers they wish to contribute to the expanded force.

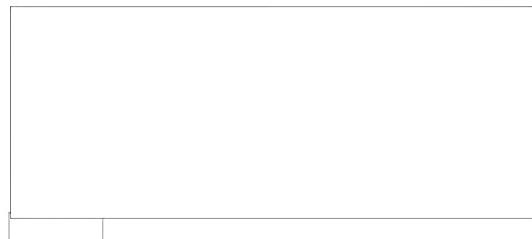
The final selection of additional contingents will be left to Lebanese President Sarkis, who is to have overall control of the peace-keeping troops. [redacted]

Saudi Arabia is expected to augment its contingent and other troop contributions are anticipated from Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco, and possibly Kuwait.

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IRAQ: The statement issued Thursday by the Iraqi regime denouncing the agreement reached at the mini-summit reflects the Iraqis' sharp annoyance with Arab sanctioning of Syria's military intervention in Lebanon.

The Iraqis probably feel betrayed by Egypt which, until recently, has been collaborating with Iraq's effort to strengthen Palestinian and Lebanese leftist forces arrayed against the Syrians.

If Iraq attends the Arab summit conference in Cairo, its performance may give some hint as to whether it will try to obstruct implementation of the agreement. Despite their opposition to the pact, the Iraqis may begin to reduce their own involvement in Lebanon if they believe that Lebanese leftists and the Palestinians intend to observe the truce. Forces controlled by Baghdad in Lebanon are not strong enough to provoke a renewal of full-scale fighting although they could spark incidents.

Iraq, having apparently parted ways with Egypt on policy toward Lebanon, may now be seeking a common approach with Libya. The Libyans have announced they will not attend the Cairo summit and are probably urging Baghdad to boycott the conference, too.

PLO Chairman Arafat, during his visit to Baghdad this week, probably pressed the Iraqis to attend the summit in spite of their misgivings. Arafat will probably urge the Iraqis to offer to send

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peacekeeping forces to Lebanon, but Syria and most of the other Arab states would certainly veto any such offer.

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PORUGAL: Political tensions are rising, fueled by continuing rumors of government changes, squabbling among the military, and divisions within the governing Socialist Party.

President Eanes seems to be worried about the current situation on several counts:

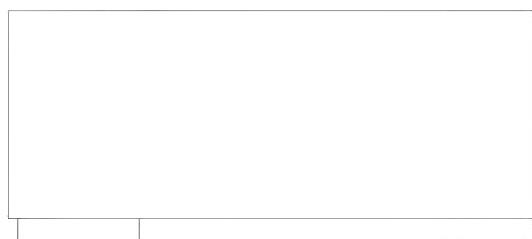
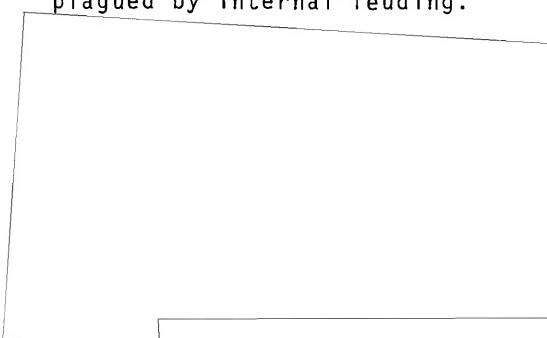
--He believes Prime Minister Soares is not doing enough to tackle Portugal's serious economic problems.

--He fears an attempt on his life by leftists, who would try to pin the blame on the right.

--He may be concerned that rightists in the military are bidding effectively for greater influence.

--He may also fear that recent protests by conscript officers over pay and promotions are weakening a military long plagued by internal feuding.

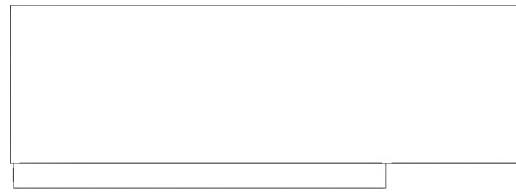
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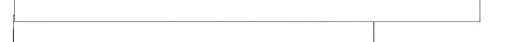
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Eanes has not settled on a course
of action, however. [redacted]



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RHODESIA: Most of Rhodesia's white population appears to be solidly behind Prime Minister Smith's policy of seeking an accommodation with the black nationalists.

The Prime Minister reportedly is reassuring the whites that the civil service is the key to carrying out any government's policies and it is likely to remain in the hands of whites well into the future. Smith is saying that since the blacks are not known to have any programs for taking over the civil service, the blacks could assume the top ministry posts while the middle and lower level white civil servants remain.

Smith's optimism may be misplaced. Once a black majority government takes power in Rhodesia, it is likely to move quickly to gain control over all aspects of the bureaucracy. There are more educated blacks in Rhodesia capable of assuming bureaucratic responsibilities than has been the case with other former British colonies at independence.



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USSR

The Supreme Soviet is scheduled to convene in Moscow next Wednesday to approve the new five-year plan and the plan and budget for 1977. There is a rash of rumors of impending changes in the top leadership. These rumors are prompted by uncertainty about Premier Kosygin's health and the expectation that the Supreme Soviet session will be preceded by a meeting of the party's Central Committee--the forum for important personnel changes.

For two years, the question of General Secretary Brezhnev's health dominated the rumor mill in Moscow, but he now appears in better health than he has been in a long time. Since he returned from vacation in September he has been very active, and rumors, so common earlier, that his retirement is imminent have ceased. Instead, attention has shifted to Kosygin.

The Premier's convalescence from his illness or accident last summer was a long one, but he looked fit when he reappeared in public on October 18 to meet the visiting Mongolian party boss.

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The hallmark of this regime has been stability within the senior ranks of the leadership. Despite rivalries and differences, each appears to have seen his own security as dependent on the security of the others. What changes have been made have been in the direction of preserving the old guard and holding off the intrusion of younger men. Youth--in the relative sense--particularly when joined with ambition, has not been well rewarded.

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This was evident in the response to Kosygin's illness. In early September, Deputy Premier Nikolay Tikhonov, a 71-year-old crony of Brezhnev from his Dnepropetrovsk days, was elevated to first deputy premier. By that time, it had probably been determined that Kosygin's recuperation might be lengthy, and Tikhonov was presumably appointed to assist Kirill Mazurov, until then the only first deputy premier, in handling some of Kosygin's workload.

Tikhonov's position entitles him to a seat on the Politburo, and he may receive it at the plenum next week. Another change expected at the plenum is the pro forma removal of Politburo member Ustinov from the party Secretariat. It is not customary for an official to hold both a full-time party job and a government post, and Ustinov has not been identified in his Secretariat post since he was named Minister of Defense in April. These may be the only personnel actions to come out of the plenum.

If Kosygin Does Retire

In the less likely event that Kosygin has decided to retire, it is not at all clear who would replace him. Tikhonov would seem to lack the credentials for the post. His appointment as first deputy premier may turn out to have been a spoiling operation to damage Mazurov's chances.

As the only first deputy premier for several years, Mazurov had established the clearest claim of anyone to succeed Kosygin. His difficulty is that of all the younger ambitious Soviet leaders--to cultivate a public image is to arouse the suspicions of the seniors, while to seek anonymity is to risk being forgotten. Mazurov has not written a major article or given an important speech aside from obligatory ones, in four years.



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One other possible candidate to succeed Kosygin is party secretary Kirilenko. Although his name has not been included in the rumors, his selection would fit the pattern of keeping the top post within the ranks of existing senior Politburo members. It would place in the top government post a long-time associate whom Brezhnev knows better

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than he knows Mazurov. It would also serve to remove Kirilenko from the line of succession to the post of general secretary, a development that Brezhnev may no longer be reluctant to see. Kirilenko might object, but it would be difficult for him to refuse such a responsible post.

Kirilenko has been one of Brezhnev's closest associates since the two served together in the Dnepropetrovsk region in the Ukraine. He has for a number of years acted as Brezhnev's unofficial deputy on the party Secretariat. He has filled in for the party boss in his absences, specifically during Brezhnev's long illness during the winter of 1974-75. Kirilenko has long been viewed in party circles as the most likely candidate to succeed Brezhnev should the latter step down in the not too distant future.

Yet Kirilenko has never been publicly recognized as second-in-command in the party and continues to be ranked in protocol listings behind veteran ideologist Suslov. The two have been engaged for many years in desultory rivalry, a situation that Brezhnev has seemed content to allow to continue. In the last year there have been signs that a little of the warmth may have gone out of Kirilenko's relationship with Brezhnev. [redacted]

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There is some evidence suggesting that contacts between Brezhnev and Kirilenko on matters of party business may have fallen off in the past year. Brezhnev seems to have increasingly insulated himself behind bureaucratic layers of personal aides and Central Committee staff members. He seems to be relying particularly on Konstantin Chernenko, who as head of the Central Committee's General Department, serves as the top executive aide to the Politburo.

The elevation of Chernenko to the party Secretariat at the 25th party congress last spring formalized his special standing and must have caused Kirilenko some concern. The close relationship between Brezhnev and Chernenko was publicly demonstrated two months later when Brezhnev in an unusual gesture

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took over President Podgorny's function and personally presented Chernenko with an award for services to the party.

Kirilenko's curious speech last week at the ceremony honoring him on his 70th birthday may reflect some uneasiness about his chances at the succession. He seemed to go out of his way to prove his loyalty to Brezhnev by a lengthy eulogy of his accomplishments. Yet Kirilenko combined this praise with a quite extraordinary recital of his own achievements.

The Succession Issue

Even if, as seems likely, Kosygin stays on as premier and the plenum brings no changes in the top leadership, Kosygin's illness must have raised again the need to take some steps toward the eventual rejuvenation of the top ranks of the leadership. All the senior members of the Politburo except Brezhnev are over 70, and Brezhnev will be 70 this December.

Brezhnev appears to be in good form now, but it is safe to assume that the pattern of wide fluctuations in the state of his health will continue. Uncertainty about his health has contributed as much to the near paralysis of political life in Moscow as has the seniors' preference for the status quo. Brezhnev has not for several years been sufficiently well long enough to provide consistently dynamic leadership, nor has he been sick long enough to force the succession issue.

Some New Factors

This pattern may well continue, but there are new factors that could bring some movement on the political scene. Even if reports of a cooling between Brezhnev and Kirilenko have been exaggerated, Kirilenko's age becomes an increasing liability for him and there is a growing likelihood that Brezhnev will start to look elsewhere for an heir. If the leaders wish to attempt to control the succession process to any extent they will have to place their candidates in responsible positions where they can gain vital national experience and recognition.

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With the exception perhaps of Mazurov, there are no leaders in their 50s or 60s who are now in the right spot with the right qualifications to have a good claim to any of the top posts. A number of qualified leaders on the national scene who once seemed to be possible contenders for higher office are now seriously hampered in one way or another.

--Andropov is an experienced and well-connected party official, but he would have to put some distance between himself and his present KGB post before he could be considered.

--Kulakov is in an advantageous position, ranking after Kirilenko in the party Secretariat, and he seems to be a favorite of Brezhnev, but he has for too long been too narrowly focused on agriculture. He was released from the position of head of the Central Committee's Agriculture Department last May presumably to allow him to take on wider responsibilities, but there is no evidence that he has yet acquired any important new assignments.

The two most favored contenders at the moment appear to be Ukrainian party boss Shcherbitsky and the head of the Leningrad regional party organization, Romanov. All have strong support in Moscow, but they are all severely hampered by lack of experience at the national level.

Shcherbitsky, another member of the Dnepropetrovsk group, is Brezhnev's closest protege. Unlike his predecessor as Ukrainian party boss, Shelest, Shcherbitsky has avoided making enemies in Moscow by assiduously putting the national interest above local concerns. After several years of being troubled by factionalism in the Ukrainian leadership, he now seems to have strengthened his local base of support sufficiently to feel free to accept a Moscow post.

Romanov's elevation to full membership on the Politburo at the 25th Party Congress tagged him as a comer, and his name has been mentioned frequently in the current round of rumors of leadership changes. He is evidently a favorite of Suslov, an important voice in any succession question. Suslov oversaw his appointment to the Leningrad post six years ago. Suslov's appearance with Romanov at a recent award ceremony in Leningrad again

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called attention to their good relationship. Romanov has also worked out a close and mutually advantageous relationship with Brezhnev; Kosygin, as a fellow Leningrader, presumably views his candidacy favorably.

If, as seems the case, these men are viewed in Moscow as the most promising candidates eventually to succeed the seniors, it seems imperative that they soon be brought to Moscow to gain experience. It would make sense to bring them in as a group and to place them in responsible though not front-running jobs. The senior members of the Politburo would probably find it easier to agree among themselves if a package deal were involved. The candidates could continue to compete and would be protected from the dangers that await an anointed heir apparent.

There are at least two leadership positions that could be filled--party secretary for the defense industry (vacated by Ustinov) and head of the trade unions organization (vacant for 18 months).

Next week's meetings will offer yet another opportunity for the seniors to begin to lay plans for an orderly succession. They have passed up numerous opportunities to do this, but while to do nothing may politically be the easiest course, it is not entirely neutral. It works to the benefit of those already well-placed on the national scene, such as Kirilenko, Mazurov, and Kulakov.

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